

What lessons for peacekeeping can be drawn from the UN experience in Cambodia?

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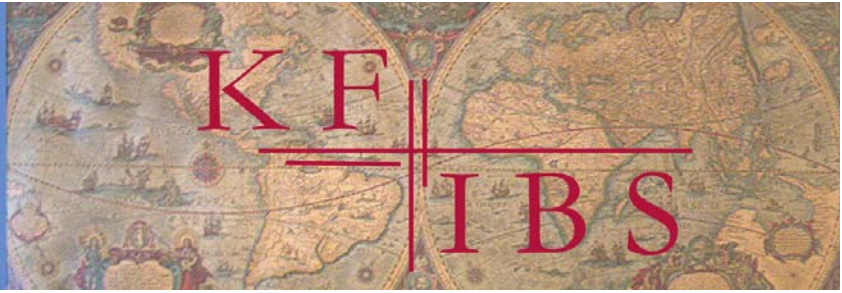
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What Lessons for Peacekeeping can be drawn from the UN Experience in Cambodia?

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* * *

Introduction

Steven Ratner (1995) analyses very precisely the ‘ongoing experiment of the international community in peacekeeping’.² After the Cold War, peacekeeping operations changed their scope according to the increasing occurrence of internal conflicts in the world. Missions became more complex and larger than the so-called ‘first-generation’ of UN peacekeeping operations. During the Cold War, operations were *generally* launched because of the observation of cease-fires. Only a few missions also covered humanitarian aspects.

By contrast, the operations of the second-generation now address a much more humanitarian aspect and further problems presented by ‘state failures’. More civilian personnel were deployed and non-military mandates were formulated. Operations should help the state to manage the conflict rather than monitor or observe a cease-fire. Past missions have merely ‘frozen a conflict in place’ without addressing the underlying causes or support a conflict transformation process.³

The United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) is such a complex mission, with a multifaceted mandate – military and internal matters, human rights, electoral conduct, governmental administration, economic rehabilitation, and refugee repatriation.⁴ As a result of this, UNTAC were tantamount to running the whole country.

The signed peace treaty and the commitment of the UN to assist in implementing the agreement, was the ‘birth’ of the most complex peacekeeping operation in the history of the UN. Like every mission, UNTAC had its ‘childhood diseases’. Therefore, what kind of lessons should the UN learn from UNTAC?

Before analysing components of the mission, which succeeded or failed, it is necessary to clarify how an outcome can be defined or evaluated. The analysis of specific aspects which were unsuccessful can highlight which lessons the UN

² Ratner, Steven, *The new UN Peacekeeping: building peace in lands of conflict after the Cold War* (New York: St. Martin's Press: Council on Foreign Relations, 1995), p. 9.

³ Ibid., p. 10.

⁴ Ibid., p. 137.

should learn. But most importantly, it should also be examined whether the UN is able and willing to adopt changes, so that missions will improve in future.

Background of the Conflict in Cambodia

Cambodia, one of the three countries of Indo-China, had a long conflict history before UNTAC was launched in April 1992. Since gaining independence from France in 1953, Cambodia experienced enormous economic problems, a history of genocide and human rights violations, a vast refugee problem and the power struggle of four different parties.

Prince Norodom Sihanouk, who was declared as the monarch of Cambodia by France in 1941, could not succeed in developing the country economically and tried to secure his power by suppressing opponents. While he went for medical treatment abroad, conservative generals and civilians led by General Lon Nol overthrew him in March 1970. The newly established government renamed Cambodia, the *Khmer Republic*. The communist party used this period of upheaval to take actions against the Lon Nol regime and fought a five-year high-intensity war, which resulted in the take-over of Cambodia by the Khmer Rouge. Led by Saloth Sar (so-called Pol Pot), the Khmer Rouge established a communist regime in Cambodia and tolerated human rights violations, like the autogenocide⁵ between 1975 and 1979. The adopted policy – which was directed against supporters of the old regime, opponents and ethnic minorities – was reason for the death of more than one million Cambodian citizens.⁶

According to Steven Ratner, the regime of Pol Pot turned aggressive against Vietnam and started frequently cross-border raids, which caused hundreds of Vietnamese casualties. Vietnam invaded Cambodia on December 25, 1978, to stop these violations and installed the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK).⁷

⁵ Autogenocide is the extermination of a country's citizens by its own people or government, <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autogenocide>>.

⁶ Estimated 20 per cent of the population died [information in: Goulding, Marrack, Peacemonger (London: J. Murray, 2002), p. 247].

⁷ Ratner, Steven (1995), p. 140.

Vietnam and PRK, with the support of the Soviet Union and its allies, was not recognised by the western countries.

Instead the West supported a rival government which was headed by [Prince] Sihanouk and called itself the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea⁸ (CGDK).⁹

Since the regime under Vietnamese occupation existed, sporadic warfare occurred between the government and the three opposition parties of CGDK. China strongly supported Khmer Rouge with military equipment to limit any further expansion of Vietnam. Also Thailand wanted to have a neutral Cambodia as a buffer zone to Vietnam.¹⁰ Therefore, conflicts arose not only within Cambodia, but also regional and geopolitical power struggle emerged.

At the end of the Cold War in December 1988, a rapid rapprochement between the Soviet Union and China happened. Representatives from both sides produced a joint statement on Cambodia, which favoured a political settlement of the conflict and a withdrawal of Vietnamese troops.¹¹ Vietnam announced the complete withdrawal of its troops by September 1989. This made further negotiations towards a settlement possible.

In August 1989, Pérez de Cuéllar illustrated at the Paris conference, what the capacities of the UN could be to support a peace process. Previous informal and formal talks with supporting countries – such as France and Indonesia – failed because of disagreements regarding the composition of a peacekeeping force, a comprehensive peace plan or the nature of the transitional authority to monitor the elections.¹² The outcome of the Paris conference could not meet the expectations and has shown that the Cambodian factions were not ready yet for a peaceful solution and the sharing of power.

⁸ Three components: Khmer Rouge; Sihanouk's United National Front for Independence, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia (FUNCINPEC); and the smaller Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) – CGDK got the UN seat [information in: Goulding, Marrack (2002), p. 248].

⁹ Goulding, Marrack (2002), p. 248.

¹⁰ Heiniger, Janet E., *Peacekeeping in Transition: The United Nations in Cambodia* (New York: The Twentieth Century Fund Press, 1994), p. 11.

¹¹ Goulding, Marrack (2002), p. 249.

¹² Heiniger, Janet E. (1994), p. 12.

The US Congressman Stephen Solarz (New York) and Australia's Foreign Minister Gareth Evans submitted a proposal which suggested 'an enhanced role for the UN in the transition process as a means of breaking the stalemate over the composition of the interim administration'. The proposal was further developed and suggested also the supervision of the election process by the UN. Due to the inability of the conflict parties to find a compromise regarding the role and tasks of the UN and a transitional authority, the permanent member states of the Security Council worked out a plan by using the Solarz-Evans working papers. When a compromise was made among the five states, the four conflict parties endorsed the Framework Document entirely and signed the peace agreement on October 23, 1991.

A detailed settlement agreement was formulated at the end of November 1991.

The Paris Agreement – a Roadmap for UNTAC

UNTAC was established in February 1992 by the Security Council resolution 745 for 'implementing the mandate envisaged in the agreements'.¹³

According to the ceasefire, the agreement urged the parties to 'disengage and refrain from all hostilities and from any deployment, movement or action which would extend the territory they control or which might lead to renewed fighting'.¹⁴ All foreign forces should be removed from Cambodian territory. Additionally, the parties agreed on the regrouping, cantonment and ultimate disposition of all Cambodian forces and their weapons during the transitional period.

The cessation of the fighting and the direct supervision of the administration should ensure a 'neutral political environment' for fair and free election to give the right to the Cambodian population to decide on their own political future. Specifically, administrative bodies were placed under direct supervision of the UN,

¹³ Security Council, Resolution 745 (1992) (New York: United Nations, 1992), <<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/011/04/IMG/NR001104.pdf?OpenElement>>.

¹⁴ Peace Agreement Cambodia, Part 1: Arrangements during the transitional period, Section V: Cease-fire and cessation of outside military assistance, Article 9, in USIP Library, Peace Agreements Digital Collection, <http://www.usip.org/pa/cambodia/agree_comppol_10231991.html>.

which could have an influence on the election process, such as the political sectors foreign affairs, national defence, finance, public security and information.

Furthermore, the UN started a repatriation programme under the supervision of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, observed human rights and the civil police, and initiated an economic rehabilitation and reconstruction programme.

‘The Supreme National Council [SNC]... is the unique legitimate body and source of authority in which, throughout the transitional period, the sovereignty, independence and unity of Cambodia are enshrined.’¹⁵

All conflict parties were represented within the SNC, which elected Prince Sihanouk as President. As defined in the annex 1 of the peace agreement, the SNC acted in a purely advisory capacity. The president, the legitimate representative of Cambodian sovereignty, only had the allowance in absence of a consensus to ‘make the decision on what advice to offer to UNTAC’.¹⁶ However, should the president also be unable to give advice to UNTAC, the power of decision would be transferred to the Special Representative of the Secretary General. ‘In all cases, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative will determine whether advice or action of the SNC is consistent with the present Agreement.’¹⁷

Obviously, the UN created the most complex mission ever and combined all tasks, which should be carried out in less than two years. Were the peace agreement and the following mandate too ambitious? Was it feasible?

According to past missions, which have already shown the limited capacity of the UN – could UNTAC succeed and which general lacks regarding UN peacekeeping operations emerged? To answer these questions in the following chapters, it is necessary to examine briefly the preconditions in the country and the situation the UN was confronted with.

¹⁵ Peace Agreement Cambodia, Part 1: Arrangements during the transitional period, Section III: Supreme National Council, Article 3, in USIP Library, Peace Agreements Digital Collection, <http://www.usip.org/pa/cambodia/agree_comppol_10231991.html>.

¹⁶ Peace Agreement Cambodia, Annex 1: UNTAC Mandate, Section A: General Procedures, in USIP Library, Peace Agreements Digital Collection, <http://www.usip.org/pa/cambodia/agree_comppol_10231991_annex1.html>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

‘Mission Impossible?’ – The Situation in Cambodia before UNTAC

Starting in 1968, Cambodia was a war zone. Even though a peace agreement was signed in 1991, the situation in the country was still tense. The UN had to face these circumstances and deal with the strong perceptions and hostility among all conflict parties.

Furthermore, Cambodia never experienced democracy before. The UN was confronted with the problem of introducing a new form of government to the people and the conflict parties. Obviously, the UN had to deal with the questions – what kind of transformation process has to be initiated to adopt democratic principles and rules? As well as how long this process will take to guarantee stability and a sustainable democratic system of governance.

The planning division of the Department for Peacekeeping Operation (DPKO) had to reckon the deeply deprived economic situation of Cambodia. After a high-intensity war over 20 years and various economic sanctions, ‘the physical infrastructure of roads, electrical capacity, airstrips, running water, and telecommunications operated at levels found in the rest of Southeast Asia decades earlier’.¹⁸ With these preconditions, lots of equipment and resources would be necessary to actually provide a solid basis for the daily work of the UN mission.

In addition, the UN intervened not only in an intra-state conflict, but also in a regional power struggle over Indochina and Southeast Asia. When Vietnam invaded Cambodia, China and Thailand feared the expansion of Vietnamese influence in the region. Most notably, China wanted to limit further expansion, which gave reason for the financial and mainly military support of the Khmer Rouge. In contrast, the Soviet Union, as China’s powerful antagonist, supported Vietnam in fighting against the three resistance groups^{19,20} Thailand was primarily

¹⁸ S.R. Ratner (1995), p. 160.

¹⁹ Khmer Rouge; Sihanouk’s United National Front for Independence, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia (FUNCINPEC); and the smaller Khmer People’s National Liberation Front (KPNLF).

²⁰ Heiniger, Janet E., *Peacekeeping in Transition: The United Nations in Cambodia* (New York: The Twentieth Century Fund Press, 1994), p. 11.

interested in a neutral Cambodia, which could be used as a buffer zone to Vietnam.

During the negotiation process particularly France pleaded for a peaceful Indochina, whereas Indonesia was more interested in a regional balance and stability.²¹

To summarize, the mission should be implemented in a country, which was a war zone for over 20 years. Additionally, Cambodia was of geopolitical and strategic interest of all adjacent countries, which had to be taken into consideration besides the internal power struggle. The dilapidated infrastructure and collapsed economy as well as the absence of an effective form of government required a complete reorganisation and reconstruction of the country to secure its future.

The next chapters will analyse the mission regarding its success and failure. Could the United Nations accomplish this mission successfully under these circumstances?

Difficulties to evaluate Peacekeeping Operations

To analyse which lessons the UN should learn from the UNTAC mission, it is necessary to point out the aspects of failure. But also learning from success is important, because it highlights the tasks, which the UN can manage. The analysis of failure can give recommendations for future improvement, the analysis of success shows what capacity the UN has to conduct specific components or maybe which of them could be expanded even further.

The meaning of success is relative and subjective. Scholars²² recommend the use of specific indicators to evaluate the outcome of missions, but, however, they do not agree in opinion. Additionally, William Durch stated, what constitutes criteria for practitioners may not be so for scholars.²³

²¹ S.R. Ratner (1995), p. 143.

²² See for example Paul Diehl, William Durch and Steven Ratner in Stern, Paul; Druckman, Daniel, Evaluating Peacekeeping Missions, in *Mershon International Studies Review*, Volume 41(1997), pp. 151-165.

²³ William Durch quoted by Druckman, Daniel; Stern, Paul C. (1997), at p. 154.

Steven Ratner argues that the evaluation of an outcome regarding a peacekeeping operation is impossible. Nevertheless, he defines four possible methods: **(a)** to compare the outcome with the original mandate, **(b)** to compare the results with those of other missions, **(c)** impact on the state concerned, and **(d)** impact on the UN or other implementing organisations.²⁴

Specific criteria published by Druckman and Stern are listed in the textbox below.²⁵ However, this list is not exhaustive.

Samples of criteria for the evaluation of UN peacekeeping operations

Viable political context, support (financial, military, diplomatic, political), feasibility of the mandate/clear achievable goals, cooperation from the parties to the dispute, quality in command process, discipline of troops, adequate resources, close coordination between peacekeeping and peacemaking, impartiality

General questions about the outcome are more a decisive factor rather than the specific search for indicators. Firstly, it is necessary to define reasonable expectations what peacekeeping operations should achieve in general to specify a basis. Furthermore, every conflict is unique and requires a special composed mission. Success becomes therefore relative regarding the prehistory of the conflict, the given mandate and the final outcome. Every peacekeeping operation does not seem comparable with other mission due to the uniqueness and the different composition.

The evaluation of success or failure by comparing the outcome with the original mandate, as Ratner suggests, could be regarded as critical. It has to be assumed that the mandate is clear and feasible. Moreover, it has to be clarified what the term 'outcome' implies. It could be a success if the tasks of a mandate would have been conducted, but the countries, in which the mission was established, have to accomplish the new challenges after a peacekeeping operation and maintain peace. Therefore, it is a question of a *short- or long-term success* – Has the peacekeeping operation restored peace, can it be sustainable? One can argue that the United Nations is not responsible for the actions and policies, which will be adopted by

²⁴ Steven Ratner quoted by Druckman, Daniel; Stern, Paul C. (1997), p. 154.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 157.

states after the missions. The UN can just help to re-establish a peaceful environment without having an influence in future practices. But nevertheless, the UN peacekeeping operations cover a wide range of tasks, which include aspects of state and/or nation-building or arms control verifications. Consequently, peacekeepers can have a deep impact on future policies by helping the state to adopt new strategies in order to become more stabile, peaceful and efficient.

With the analysis of the missions after the Cold War, the above has to be scrutinised to see if a complete success is ever possible due to the complexity and other various factors, which have to be examined (see above)? Deep-rooted and protracted conflicts have to be settled. Normally, peacekeeping is a mechanism for controlling or managing conflicts.²⁶ But a whole peace process has to be initiated to transform the conflict and to give a chance for reconciliation. This implies the question – to which extent peacekeeping operations can address underlying causes to finally avoid a new outbreak of conflicts after the withdrawal of UN peacekeepers. As Steven Ryan speaks with Galtung's words, peacekeeping may reduce direct violence, but do not focus on structural violence.²⁷

The Analysis of the Mission

This study will analyse the mission from two perspectives: **(1)** the involvement and performance of the United Nations headquarters, and **(2)** the performance of UNTAC in the country, which includes the role of the conflict parties regarding the outcome of the mission.

²⁶ C. Thornberry, *The Development of International Peacekeeping*, LSE Centenary Lectures (London: Academic Publications Committee LSE, 1995), p. 37.

²⁷ S. Ryan, United Nations Peacekeeping: A Matter of Principles?, in *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Spring 2000), pp. 27-47: at p. 33.

The Involvement and Performance of the UN Headquarter

During the peace negotiations and conferences, the idea of the proposals submitted by US Congressman Stephen Solarz (New York) and Australia's Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, which suggested 'an enhanced role for the UN in the transition process' of Cambodia, were adopted by the participating countries and gave direction for future decisions. Due to the inability of the conflict parties to find a compromise regarding the role and tasks of the UN and a transitional authority, the permanent member states of the Security Council (P5) worked out a plan by using the Solarz-Evans working papers.

Generally, 'the written international agreement, (...), represents the most formal method of a political settlement and consent to a UN presence'.²⁸ The agreement testifies the willingness of the parties to accept a UN mission in the country. As it will be analysed in chapter 4.2, consent is essential to legitimise a *peacekeeping* operation and ensure the cooperation with the parties.²⁹ The legally binding treaty, however, can be formulated with an ambiguous language to achieve a compromise,³⁰ but at the same time gives opportunities for the parties to interpret it in different ways.

In the case of Cambodia, such consent and willingness to implement the treaty has to be questioned. As mentioned above, the peace plan was exclusively framed by the P5 due to the inability to reach a decision among the conflict parties. Finally, the parties signed the agreement because of international pressure.³¹ It was predictable from the outset that the parties could tend to take their commitments not seriously.³² Even if no scholar points it out explicitly, it has to be considered that the UN mission was enforced. On the other hand, it was not conceivable that the parties would agree on a settlement of the dispute. For the period of the mission, it was envisaged to make the SNC to an institution in which

²⁸ S.R. Ratner (1995), p. 26.

²⁹ C. Dobbie, A Concept for Post-Cold War Peacekeeping, in *Survival*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (Autumn 1994), pp. 121-148: at p. 122.

³⁰ S.R. Ratner (1995), p. 27.

³¹ Ibid., p. 158: SOC did fear its future in absence of Vietnamese troops and Soviet aid; resistance worried about end of Chinese support and international consensus against the Khmer Rouge would lead to legitimization of SOC.

³² M. Hong, The Paris Agreement on Cambodia: In Retrospective, in *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Spring 1995), pp. 93-98: at p. 97.

compromises could be made, but it was also suspected that this council would rarely speak with one voice. Accordingly, the Special Representative had the 'prerogative to act as he wished',³³ if the SNC could not give advice. The Special Representative had therefore extraordinary authority and could even overrule all factions, if he would consider this method as necessary to implement the peace agreement.³⁴

This approach of conducting a peacekeeping operation is highly controversial. Even if there is no alternative to settle the conflict differently, the risk is always very high that the parties are unwilling to cooperate later on or resist against the presence of the UN mission.

In the following, it has to be analysed whether the UN overestimated its ability and capacity to conduct this complex operation.

Firstly, UNTAC had to compete with four missions, which had been established in the past 12 months (Iraq/Kuwait, Western Sahara, Angola and El Salvador) and with two other missions which were being launched in the former Yugoslavia and Mozambique.³⁵ Besides the planning and composition of the peacekeeping operations, the *financial factor* raised a problem for the United Nations.

| Name of mission | Duration | Total Cost (gross) |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| UNIKOM (Iraq/Kuwait) | April 1991 – June 2003 | \$ 600 million |
| MINURSO (Western Sahara) | April 1991 – present | \$ 560 million |
| UNAVEM II (Angola) | May 1991 – Feb 1995 | \$ 175,8 million |
| ONUSAL (El Salvador) | July 1991 – April 1995 | \$ 107,7 million |
| UNTAC (Cambodia) | Feb 1992 – Sept 1993 | \$ 1,6 billion |
| ONUMOZ (Mozambique) | Dec 1992 – Dec 1994 | \$ 492,6 million |
| All missions in former Yugoslavia | Feb 1992 – March 1996 | \$ 4,6 billion |

Source: <<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/index.asp>>.

The table above lists the total cost of the peacekeeping operations which were conducted contemporaneously to UNTAC. To clarify it, the UN budget for

³³ S.R. Ratner (1995), p. 148.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ M. Goulding, *Peacemonger* (London: J. Murray, 2002), p. 247.

peacekeeping operations totalled \$ 3.6 billion in 1993. Even if it was approximately just 0.3 per cent of the annual world's national defence budget,³⁶ most of the countries failed to pay on time. Due to the fact that the operations are not funded by the regular UN budget, the organisation is dependent on voluntary contributions.³⁷ Consequently, 'Peacekeeping is in a continuous state of financial crisis'.³⁸ With regard to the emergence of new conflicts, the overall voluntary funding declines continuously. In 1993, UN Funds and Programmes had to face a fall of 11.5 per cent of their annual budget.³⁹

'Peacekeeping operations are run on a shoestring'.⁴⁰

Several newly established missions after the Cold War were under-resourced and over-ambitious. As the former Assistant Secretary General, Cedric Thornberry, speaks from his own experience, the Secretariat was almost overwhelmed with the burden of work.⁴¹

The international community did not pay much attention on Cambodia, because in Somalia and the former Yugoslavia the crisis even worsened. DPKO could only devote two people to work on Cambodia,⁴² who should plan a peacekeeping mission with approximately 22.000 personnel. The lack of capacity within the UN headquarter had an effect on the whole preparation process. The Secretariat informed the Security Council that the planning, recruitment and deployment could take months, although all parties wished to deploy UNTAC as soon as possible. With the mechanism that the General Assembly had to approve the budget and the member states would volunteer personnel, it was not predictable, when UNTAC could conduct the mission.⁴³

³⁶ C. Thornberry (1995), p. 39.

³⁷ P. F. Diehl, Peacekeeping Operations and the Quest for Peace, in *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 103, No. 3 (Autumn 1988), pp. 485-507: at p. 494.

³⁸ A. Roberts, The Crisis in UN Peacekeeping, in *Survival*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (Autumn 1994), pp. 93-120: at p. 117.

³⁹ C. Thornberry (1995), p. 38.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 40.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. viii.

⁴² S.R. Ratner (1995), pp. 161-162.

⁴³ T. Findlay, *Cambodia: The Legacy and Lessons of UNTAC*, SIPRI Research Report No. 9 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 116 and S.R. Ratner (1995), pp. 162-164.

Furthermore, DPKO had no reliable and outdated information about the country as well as did not involve the heads of the components into the planning process.⁴⁴

During the planning of the mission, Pérez de Cuéllar was replaced as Secretary General by Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Before the new election, de Cuéllar refused to appoint Rafeeuddin Ahmed⁴⁵ as Special Representative of UNTAC. Five months after the peace agreement, Boutros-Ghali first decision on Cambodia was the appointment of Yasushi Akashi as Special Representative.⁴⁶

Because of all these factors, UNTAC could start the operation nine months after the peace agreement was signed, and even then some units of the civil police were still not present.⁴⁷

Late deployment loses the momentum derived from popular support, from the commitment of the parties, and from the psychological weight associated with a large operation moving rapidly towards an agreed goal.⁴⁸

The whole success of a mission can be jeopardized, because the time between a signed agreement and the delayed deployment could be an opportunity for the factions to doubt the efficiency of the UN or to use this time frame for restarting violent actions.⁴⁹

Generally, the UN always has problems in planning missions and deploying the personnel at an early stage. It is questionable if these deficits can ever be remedied.

⁴⁴ T. Findlay (1995), pp. 118-119.

⁴⁵ Rafeeuddin Ahmed – UN's senior diplomat on Cambodia since 1981, with the most experience on the conflict.

⁴⁶ M. Goulding (2002), p. 255.

⁴⁷ M. W. Doyle; N. Suntharalingam, *The UN in Cambodia: Lessons for Complex Peacekeeping*, in *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 1. No. 2 (Summer 1994), pp. 117-147: at p. 131.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ T. Findlay (1995), p. 113.

Success and Failure of UNTAC

It is beyond the scope of this study to point out every aspect for evaluating the mission. Scholars, such as Ratner, Finday and Doyle, give very detailed information about the various components of UNTAC and their performance.

Most of the peacekeeping operations, if not all of them, have always some problems in common: logistical shortcomings and delayed supply of equipment, difficulties to deploy specialised staff (both military and civilian personnel), lack of knowledge about the location and the local costumes, lack of standardised training for military or police units, misbehaviour of personnel in the country, language difficulties (even among the personnel), lack of communication to the headquarter and lack of communication and coordination among the components of the mission.

The complexity of multilateral operations requires a high standard of coordination and co-operation. Most of the elements lacking could be eliminated, if the DPKO office would increase their capacity, if the preparation of a mission could be accelerated, if the member states of the United Nations would be willing to provide more funds and would commit themselves to adopt a standardised training for their troops.

One of the decisive factors why the **military component** did not succeed was the failure to fully disarm and demobilise the forces of the Cambodian factions, especially the Khmer Rouge. The factions agreed on a French proposal in August 1991 to reduce 'each of their military forces and their weaponry by 70 per cent and regroup the remaining 30 per cent in UN-supervised cantonment areas'.⁵⁰ Already in the preliminary stage of the negotiation, the factions disputed about the number of the faction's forces to which the demobilisation would apply. UNTAC began the demobilisation process on June 13, 1992, but the Khmer Rouge refused to join this so-called Phase II of the ceasefire.⁵¹

⁵⁰ J.E. Heiniger (1994), p. 27.

⁵¹ US General Accounting Office, *Report UN Peacekeeping: lessons learnt in managing recent missions* (Washington D.C.: US General Accounting Office, 1993), p. 25.

The Khmer Rouge justified its withdrawal mainly by the fact that the Paris accords had not been implemented properly. According to Khmer Rouge, the withdrawal of the Vietnamese troops, one of the most important provisions of the agreement, was not completed. Vietnam officially had withdrawn its forces in September 1989, but after an investigation of UNTAC it was confirmed that still some Vietnamese staff officers worked for the 'State of Cambodia' (SOC) armed forces.⁵²

This non-cooperation prompted the other factions to question, why their troops should be disarmed and demobilised, when the Khmer Rouge forces could be maintained. Even if 50.000 troops from three factions were in UNTAC cantonment sites by September 1992, the process decelerated within the next months.⁵³ Therefore, the military component of UNTAC could not fully perform its task, which also had a deep impact on the security situation. Numerous ceasefire violations occurred. The Khmer Rouge continued to expand their territory and intensified the military clashes with the Phnom Penh regime. Even new massacres of Vietnamese by Khmer Rouge were reported in March 1993.⁵⁴ Despite of the high risk of jeopardising the mission and the permission 'to use all powers necessary to ensure the implementation of [the] agreement',⁵⁵ Special Representative Akashi and General John Sanderson did not use force to disarm the Khmer Rouge and to stop the ceasefire violations.⁵⁶ Intensive negotiations with Khmer Rouge representatives were the chosen alternative method, which had no result.

Instead of applying military means, UNTAC focused on the forthcoming elections without having a guarantee for the security of staff members and civilians. Gerard Procell, chief of UNTAC's own Civil Administration Component, stated in January 1993:

[W]e do not have the will to apply the peace accords. This absence of firmness with the Khmer Rouge was a sort of signal for the other parties

⁵² M. Goulding (2002), p. 256.

⁵³ US General Accounting Office (1993), p. 25.

⁵⁴ S.R. Ratner (1995), p. 171.

⁵⁵ Article 6 of Paris Agreement, Source:

<http://www.usip.org/library/pa/cambodia/agree_comppol_10231991.html>.

⁵⁶ M. Doyle and N. Suntharalingam (1994), p. 128.

who saw there the proof of UNTAC's weakness towards the group that from the start eschewed all cooperation.⁵⁷

But what should be done if one party has withdrawn the consent? Is the use of force acceptable to maintain stability, even if one principle of peacekeeping operations is the non-use of force? How should the UN forces react in cases of ceasefire violations?

After signing the agreement and during the planning process of a mission, everything was uncertain regarding the cooperation of the local authorities in the country.⁵⁸ Normally, peacekeepers should be impartial and should avoid any escalation or involvement in military fights. The principle of avoiding the use of force, except in self-defence, was adopted to become not a part of the conflict and to prevent the possible support of one party. The use of force can also cause local opposition or mistrust.⁵⁹ The reluctance can therefore just be explained by the traditional concept of peacekeeping and the security of the national troops. But is that reason enough to jeopardise the security of the civilian population in Cambodia? The UN should intervene in human rights violations, such as the killing of civilians by the Khmer Rouge. This includes the enforced disarmament of the Khmer Rouge forces. Marrack Goulding suggested that a change from peacekeeping to peace-enforcement should be clearly signalled to all parties and thus there must be convincing evidence why this change will be undertaken.⁶⁰

Using force should be the last resort, but also the manner of the forces towards the factions is important. In the Cambodian case, the Dutch battalion had learnt the language and had a reputation for rapid and decisive actions in defence of soldiers and civilians. Together with the Malaysian battalion, they were feared especially among the Khmer Rouge forces. Other contingents, such as the Indonesian, were more passive.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Porcell quoted by M. Doyle and N. Suntharalingam (1994), p. 128.

⁵⁸ C. Dobbie (1994), p. 125.

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 125, 126, 130, 136 and 137.

⁶⁰ M. Goulding, The Use of Force by the United Nations, in *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1996), p. 16.

⁶¹ J.E. Heiniger (1994), p. 75.

The UN assigned the task to the 3600-man contingent of the **Civil Police (CIVPOL)** to supervise the police forces of all Cambodian factions and to oversee law and order in the country. Although this deployment of CIVPOL was the largest in UN history, it was a relatively new experience and the UN could not provide doctrine for police operations, so that the role of CIVPOL remained unclear. Due to missing specifications of the do's and don'ts, the component could not effectively respond to criminal incidents or invested many crimes without having further tools, such as laws, courts or jails.⁶²

The contingent was not even fully deployed in November 1992, and the troops were sent by 32 member states. 13 states out of 14 were developing countries, which sent each of them more than 100 police troops. UNTAC commanders often received reports about indiscipline, human rights abuses and corruption. The police unit meant to be unarmed, but some had bought weapons from the SOC police.⁶³

The UN should adopt specific doctrine for the police force and initiate disciplinary proceedings against those troops which act against a general code of conduct. During the planning process, it has to be guaranteed that the qualification of the police forces is adequate. Many members of the police unit were paramilitary border guards.⁶⁴ Misbehaviour could be avoided from the outset, if the record of individuals would have been checked. 'The Security Council has the right to refuse contribution of countries, if they seem unsuitable.'⁶⁵ It is also necessary to provide a special and standardised training before the deployment.

The uncompleted demobilisation and the ineffective police control did not create an atmosphere of peace and domestic order,⁶⁶ and in addition to this the supervision of the **civil administration** could not guarantee a 'neutral political environment', which should be achieved to conduct free and fair elections. This implies the task for the civil administration component to exercise control and

⁶² T. Findlay (1995), p. 145.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 144.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 146.

⁶⁶ S.R. Ratner (1995), p. 159.

supervision over the factional governments, especially the administration apparatus of the Cambodian People's Party (CPP). The bureaucratised and complex administration of SOC had to be directly controlled in five branches – foreign affairs, defence, information, security and finance – to finally neutralise the political environment and avoid a negative influence on the election process, especially from the incumbent CPP.⁶⁷ Two types of control were adopted: '*a priori*, involving a prior knowledge of, and the ability to change, proposed governmental decisions; *a posteriori*, permitting UNTAC to receive documents and require alterations in governmental action'.⁶⁸ Porcell, Chief of the component 'Civil Administration', recognised that a full control would require a large amount of personnel, which could not be provided. Therefore, UNTAC concentrated on those areas which could have the most impact on the forthcoming elections.

The component lacked specialised and experienced staff, interpreters for the documents, which were exclusively written in Khmer language, and time to plan this major task.⁶⁹ It has to be questioned, whether the supervision of key parts of an administration can ever be feasible. Moreover, is a 'neutral political environment' possible? Even if the civil administration would succeed, such neutral environment requires also the success of the military and civil police component.

[The] staff spent the initial months in-country defining how to control the ministries, identifying logistical needs, and mapping out the organisation of ministries.⁷⁰

Besides the time, which UNTAC lost because of this proceeding, the component did not reckon the personalised decision-making structure in Cambodia. While UNTAC tried to manage the massive workload and control the daily work of the administration units, important decisions were moved to the party channels.⁷¹

⁶⁷ D. Roberts, More Honoured in the Breech: Consent and Impartiality in the Cambodian Peacekeeping Operation, in *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Spring 1997), pp. 1-25: at p. 7.

⁶⁸ S.R. Ratner (1995), p. 173.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 173 and T. Findlay (1995), pp. 137-138.

⁷⁰ US General Accounting Office (1993), p. 31.

⁷¹ S.R. Ratner (1995), p. 174.

Partial success was achieved by investigating some cases of corruption and removing some factional officials. But because most of the SOC staff members were corrupt, the replacement of officials had no effect.⁷²

Other parties criticised, stating that UNTAC could not achieve the neutral political environment and minimise the influence of CPP within the administration, which caused the marginalisation of the other factions and made an access to the organs of the state almost impossible. This '[undermined] the credibility of UNTAC's claim to impartiality'.⁷³

After the failure to achieve the goal of a 'neutral political environment', UNTAC mainly focused on the preparation and the conduction of the **election**. The situation was described by Akashi and Boutros-Ghali as an environment with 'basic minimum acceptable conditions'.⁷⁴ In the run-up to the elections, Khmer Rouge conducted terror attacks against the civilian population and UNTAC. More than 100 violent incidents were reported during the campaigning period between March 1 and May 14, 1993, which caused 200 casualties, 338 injuries and 114 abductions.⁷⁵ Especially the death of a Japanese UN Volunteer and his interpreter as well as the assassination of 13 civilian and military personnel during the attacks of UNTAC outposts by the Khmer Rouge resulted in the withdrawal of 60 UNTAC staff members, who supported the electoral component. Nevertheless, the civilian, military and police officials succeed in registering nearly all eligible voters (4.6 million)⁷⁶ and inform them in a widespread campaign about their right of secret voting.⁷⁷

The Security Council warned the factions before the elections one last time, that in cases of violent attacks during the polling, UNTAC would respond appropriately. CIVPOL and the military component were deployed to guard

⁷² M. Doyle and N. Suntharalingam (1994), p. 125.

⁷³ D. Roberts (1997), p. 7.

⁷⁴ Quoted by S.R. Ratner (1995), p. 177.

⁷⁵ M. Doyle and N. Suntharalingam (1994), pp. 135-136.

⁷⁶ Cambodians overseas could vote as well, as long as they registered in Cambodia and vote at three polling stations outside Cambodia, see S.R. Ratner (1995), p. 178.

⁷⁷ S.R. Ratner (1995), p. 179.

opposition party offices and shell voters on their way to polling stations in dangerous areas.⁷⁸

During the polling between May 23 and May 28, 1993, no significant violence was reported and the election procedure could be completed successfully with 80 per cent voter participation. The motive of the Khmer Rouge to stop violence during this period was widely discussed. It can be assumed that China and Thailand put pressure on the faction.

Unfortunately, the election victory of FUNCINPEC (45.5 %) was reason for CPP (38.2%) to reject the acceptance of the election result. With the belief that the results were manipulated, the faction threatened Akashi with a bloody revolt. After CPP attacked UNTAC offices in June 1993, Prince Sihanouk called for sanity. His influence and acceptance among the parties was guarantor for the peaceful opening of the Constituent Assembly.⁷⁹

Scholars, such as Doyle, consider the election process as a remarkable success, because it gave Cambodians for the first time the right to decide about the future of their country. 'What was unique about this process was the UN's role in guaranteeing democracy.'⁸⁰ But it has to be distinguished between a short-term and a long-term success. Without any question, it was a great success to conduct this election, but the question of how the Cambodians, and especially the factions, dealt with these results in the aftermath must be examined. Could the newly established 'democracy' survive? Predictably, new disputes among the factions emerged to maintain power or gain more influence after the withdrawal of UNTAC. The United Nations should focus on the initiation of a peace process, which includes, for example, the transformation of the conflict, reconciliation and rehabilitation of the troops, to finally give the factions a chance to change their attitudes, perceptions and adopted manners. With such a proceeding, a sustainable peace could be more likely.

⁷⁸ M. Doyle and N. Suntharalingam (1994), p. 136 and S.R. Ratner (1995), p. 179.

⁷⁹ Y. Akashi, 'The Challenge of Peacekeeping in Cambodia', in *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Summer 1994), pp. 204-215: at p. 206.

⁸⁰ M. Doyle and N. Suntharalingam (1994), p. 121.

The **repatriation program**, which was conducted by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) between March 30, 1992 and April 30, 1993, was also considered as extraordinary success. The return of 361,462 refugees from Thailand to Cambodia was definitely a success, especially if it will be taken into account that each refugee also received a household kit and the guarantee for food supply in the following 400 days.⁸¹

International protocols ensured the return to places of each person's choice and freedom of movement within Cambodia. Doyle, Johnstone and Orr question the willingness of the refugees to move back to their home country. Firstly, UNHCR planned to close the refugee camps in Thailand and therefore the status of the refugees would be terminated.⁸² Secondly, the refugees were brought back into a country before the election and in advance of a political solution. The refugees found themselves again in a situation of uncertainty and violence, which was reason for them to leave the country. During the repatriation process, the military component has failed to disarm the factions and to remove mines in specific areas.⁸³

Conclusions

‘Cambodia remains a unique experiment for the United Nations.’⁸⁴

In the aftermath, the peacekeeping operation in Cambodia can not be characterised as remarkable success. In fact, it was a short-term success. But without initiating a peace process and achieving the disarmament of the factions, a *sustainable peace* could not be restored. Attacks between the factions emerged again after the withdrawal of the UN peacekeeping operation.

It can be assumed that the mandate was too ambitious and broad. The UN has not the capacity and resources to literally run a whole country. The Security

⁸¹ Michael Doyle, Ian Johnstone, Robert C. Orr, *Keeping the peace: Multidimensional UN operations in Cambodia and El Salvador* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 167.

⁸² Ibid., p. 172.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ J.E. Heininger (1994), p. 117.

Council and the Secretariat overestimated this operation, and jeopardised at the same time the whole mission in the country. Therefore, the most decisive factor is a clear and feasible mandate.

Other areas of improvements are listed in the following:

1. better resources (equipment, funds)
2. specialised staff
3. better capacity within the DPKO office (more specialised staff)
4. advanced planning and faster deployment
5. better communication and coordination among and within the headquarter and the peacekeeping operation
6. formulating a code of conduct
7. adequate means to implement the agreement (use of force as last resort)
8. standardised training for military and police units
9. better cooperation with local authorities

This is just a selection of possible improvements. But the question of whether UN is able and willing to adopt those improvements must be asked. Several missions after UNTAC, such as Rwanda and former Yugoslavia, have also shown massive and general short-comings. These changes within the UN system can only be initiated if the member states, and especially the big donors, have the political will to advance the capacities of the UN. With the political will, the states are also more willing to increase the budget of UN peacekeeping. Only with the understanding that peacekeeping could be a method to transform conflicts and to achieve sustainable peace in the world, member states, such as the United States as biggest contributor of peacekeeping operations, will be willing to support missions more adequately.

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Appendix

The factions of the conflict

| Party name | Army | Troop Strength | Police component |
|--|--|------------------------------|------------------|
| Cambodian People's Party (CPP), State of Cambodia (SOC) | Cambodian People's Armed Forces (CPAF) | 60,000 – 130,000 (estimated) | 47,000 |
| Party of Democratic Kampuchea (PDK) (Khmer Rouge) | National Army of Democratic Kampuchea (NADK) | 27,000 – 40,000 (estimated) | 9,000 |
| United National Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia (FUNCINPEC) | Armée Nationale Sihanoukiste (ANS) | 15,000 | 150 |
| Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) | Khmer People's National Liberation Armed Forces (KPNLAF) | 10,000 | 400 |

Source: Doyle (1997), p. 110.